



## Mississippi's Homeland Security Efforts

### **Overview**

What is Homeland Security? Homeland Security is a concerted State and National effort to prevent terrorist attacks within the State, reduce our vulnerability to terrorism, minimize the damage, and recover from attacks that do occur.

Mississippi has a multi-hazard approach to emergency planning, including terrorism. This means that the state has plans in place to cover all types of disasters. In fact, the State published an Annex to the Comprehensive Plan addressing terrorism preparedness and response in 1999. Since September 11, 2001, the focus has been updating the state's emergency response plan in areas specifically relating to terrorism.

Governor Ronnie Musgrove named Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Robert R. Latham, Jr. to head up Mississippi's Homeland Security efforts. In this capacity, Latham is working with the National Office of Homeland Security, under the direction of former Governor Tom Ridge.

Mr. Latham is spearheading Mississippi's efforts to be better prepared to prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorist attacks by working closely with Federal, State, and Local Agencies.

### **Mississippi's Emergency Response Plan**

Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is leading a multi-agency task force charged with preparing state government to deal with terrorism. Immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks, Governor Musgrove asked state agencies to re-energize their domestic preparedness efforts. As a result, the group is enhancing the current capabilities and assets of state government and is using this information to refine the Homeland Security components of the state's emergency response plan. To accomplish this, the Agency identified primary state agencies for key portions of the plan and those agencies are leading the review and updating. Other agencies are assisting in the process as well. Additionally, MEMA is working with local agencies to establish, equip, and train Regional Response Teams capable of responding to any type of Terrorist incident. This revised plan will be supportive of both the State and National strategies.

### **Critical Assets Identification**

Governor Musgrove has made identification and protection of Mississippi's critical assets a top priority of the state's Homeland Security Initiative against terrorism. This critical asset plan will ensure that state government is better prepared to protect those critical assets and services that are important to the welfare of Mississippians.

MEMA is working with government and private sector partners to compile an inventory of the state's critical assets. These critical assets may include infrastructure, locations, or events where large groups of people gather, and symbols of power, such as the State Capitol Building.

### **State Emergency Operations Center**

This facility activated for several days immediately following the September 11 terrorist attacks. The Emergency Operations Center is in "warm" status, meaning it can be activated and operational at a moment's notice.

### **Standardized Incident Response**

Mississippi is prepared to respond to any incident, including terrorism, using the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). NIIMS is a nationally standardized system to manage incidents and will enable all Emergency First Responders to function in a multi-discipline and multi-jurisdictional response and better coordinate their efforts through a seamless integration of resources.

[Executive Order # 851](#) signed by Governor Musgrove on October 16, 2001 implemented NIIMS as the State standard for all responses.

### **Working with Local Government Partners**

The backbone of Mississippi's emergency management structure is a network of emergency management agencies located in many of the state's 82 counties. A locally appointed emergency management coordinator provides day-to-day management of each agency.